

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01  
SAJ-01 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 XMB-02 AID-05 /071 W  
----- 041965 /20

P R 170950Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4287  
INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
USLO PEKING  
CINCPAC HONOLULU  
COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA  
COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA  
USAFJ CAMP ZAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 18549

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

DEPT PLEASE PASS ALL NATO CAPITALS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, JA, US  
SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF JAPANESE ELECTION

REFS: (A) TOKYO 17935 (B) TOKYO 18007 (C) TOKYO 18060

SUMMARY. IN AFTERMATH OF GENERAL ELECTION, OUR SOUNDINGS  
INDICATE THAT, IN HANDING RULING LDP SHARP SETBACK,  
VOTERS WERE PROTESTING LONG-STANDING CONSERVATIVE  
METHODS OF DOING BUSINESS -- NOT FUNDAMENTAL GOJ POLICIES.  
IN DOING SO, THEY TURNED TO SMALLER,  
CNETRIST PARTIES WHICH, FOR MOST PART, SHARE WITH RULING  
LDP INTERNATIONALIST, NON-MARXIST APPROACH TO ISSUES.  
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ELECTION RESULTS WILL, HOWEVER, LEAD TO REPLACEMENT  
OF MIKI ADMINISTRATION, DIFFICULT DIET STEERING  
PROBLEMS FOR LDP, AND POLITICAL PREOCCUPATION  
WITH JULY 1977 UPPER HOUSE ELECTION, ALL OF WHICH  
ALMOST CERTAIN TO SLOW NORMALLY DELIBERATE PACE  
OF DECISION MAKING HERE. IN LONGER PERSPECTIVE,

QUESTION IS WHETHER LDP CAN STAGE COMEBACK, AN  
ISSUE ON WHICH OPINION IS DIVIDED.  
CHANGE, EVEN IF IT COMES, IS LIKELY TO BE GRADUAL  
AND WITHOUT FUNDAMENTAL POLICY SHIFTS. END SUMMARY.

1. AS DUST SETTLES AFTER GENERAL ELECTION, OUR SOUNDINGS WITH  
POLITICIANS, JOURNALISTS AND ACADEMICS INDICATE  
JAPANESE URBAN AND SUBURBAN VOTERS, IN HANDLING RULING  
LDP A SHARP SETBACK, WERE PROTESTING LONG-STANDING  
METHODS OF DOING BUSINESS -- NOT FUNDAMENTAL CONSERVATIVE  
POLICIES. THEY WERE PROTESTING CONTINUING PRONENESS  
OF LDP TO BUSINESS-RELATED CORRUPTION, OF WHICH LOCKHEED  
IS BUT MOST RECENT AND DRAMATIC EXAMPLE. THEY WERE  
PROTESTING BACKROOM DECISION-MAKING BY AGING PARTY ELDERS  
(MOSTLY IN THEIR SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES) AND PERCEIVED LDP  
OBSESSION WITH INTRA-PARTY POWER POLITICS AT EXPENSE OF  
LARGER NATIONAL CONCERNS. VOTERS TOOK ISSUE WITH  
CONSERVATIVE UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCOMMODATE POPULAR DEMANDS  
FOR LOCKHEED DISCLOSURE, A TAX CUT, AND ECONOMIC AID FOR  
SPECIFIC HARDHIT LOCAL AREAS. THEY WISHED, IN SHORT, TO  
TEACH LDP A LESSON.

2. IN DOING SO, THEY TURNED NOT TO MARXIST LEFT, BUT TO  
SMALLER MODERATE PARTIES OF CENTER. THIS IS BEING INTER-  
PRETED HERE, ACCURATELY WE BELIEVE, AS VOTER DESIRE FOR  
CONSERVATIVE REFORM, NOT AS REJECTION OF JAPAN'S INTER-  
NATIONALIST POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORIENTATION AND  
SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH US.  
THIS IS BORNE OUT BY NATURE AND IMAGE OF  
SUCCESSFUL SMALLER CENTRIST PARTIES. CONSPICUOUS WINNER  
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CONSERVATIVE OFF-SHOOT NEW LIBERAL CLUB (NLF), IS COMPOSED  
OF YOUNGISH POLITICIANS WITH PROBABLY GREATER EXPOSURE  
TO US AND US IDEAS THAN ANY OTHER POLITICAL GROUP. THEY  
ARE COMMITTED TO US-JAPAN RELATIONSHIP AND SECURITY  
TREATY. MODERATE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS ALSO SUPPORT  
BASIC US-JAPAN RELATIONSHIP AND SECURITY TREATY;  
MOREOVER, THEIR MODERATE UNION SUPPORT BASE (DOMEI) IS  
CONCENTRATED IN INDUSTRIES EXPORTING TO THE WEST. OF  
THREE CENTRIST PARTY GAINERS, ONLY BUDDHIST-SUPPORTED CLEAN  
GOVERNMENT PARTY REMAINS SOMETHING OF AN ENIGMA AND WOULD  
THEORETICALLY, AS MATTER OF PARTY POLICY, TAMPER WITH  
SECURITY TREATY. BUT IT TOO IS COMMITTEED PHILOSOPHICALLY  
TO INTERNATIONALISM. IN SHORT, VOTE FOR CENTRIST PARTIES  
WAS SEEN AS A "SAFE" PROTEST IN POLICY TERMS, A VOTE  
FOR YOUNGER MEN AND WAYS OF DOING BUSINESS MORE IN TUNE  
WITH CONTEMPORARY JAPAN, MORE RESPONSIVE TO POPULAR WILL.

3. IF BASIC POLICY SHIFTS WERE NOT INTENDED, SHARPLY

REDUCED CONSERVATIVE LOWER-HOUSE MAJORITY WILL NEVER-THELESS PROMPT CHANGES. AS DIRECT RESULT OF ELECTION, MIKI WILL BE REPLACED BY NEW CONSERVATIVE LEADER, PROBABLY BY FORMER DEPUTY PRIME FUKUDA, DURING NEXT WEEK OR SO AND, IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER, NEW CABINET WILL BE SELECTED. IN ADDITION TO USUAL DIFFICULTIES, NEW ADMINISTRATION WILL FACE STICKY DIET-MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS SIMILAR TO THOSE WE HAVE SEEN OVER PAST TWO YEARS IN UPPER HOUSE, WHERE CONSERVATIVES HAVE ONLY RAZOR-THIN MAJORITY. NORMAL STEERING PROBLEMS WILL BE MAGNIFIED BY NEED TO ALLOT MORE TIME FOR DELIBERATION, CONSULT MORE EXTENSIVELY WITH OPPOSITION PARTIES AND COMPROMISE MORE OFTEN THAN CONSERVATIVES ARE USED TO. LDP WILL ALSO HAVE TO CONSIDER ALL DECISIONS IN FORMING NEW GOVERNMENT, ESTABLISHING BUDGET PRIORITIES AND PLANNING LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM IN TERMS OF THEIR IMPACT ON NEXT SUMMER'S UPPER HOUSE ELECTION. CAUTION AND COMPROMISE THUS LIKELY TO BE ORDERS OF DAY FOR NEW ADMINISTRATION. AS RESULT, CONFIDENTIAL

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PACE OF POLITICAL-DECISION MAKING, ALREADY DELIBERATE, WILL BECOME EVEN MORE SO.

4. THESE NEAR-TERM CONSEQUENCES STEM FROM REALIGNMENT OF LOWER HOUSE SEATS. LONGER-TERM IMPLICATIONS ARE LINKED TO POPULAR VOTE TOTALS FOR PARTIES. ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE TRUE THAT "CONSERVATIVE" VOTE (COMMONLY DEFINED AS LDP SHARE PLUS THAT FOR CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENTS AND NLF) HAS NOT DECLINED, FACT OF MATTER IS THAT NLC ALMOST SURELY DREW PORTION OF ITS VOTE FROM OPPOSITION AND WILL, IN ANY EVENT, ACT SUBSTANTIALLY INDEPENDENTLY OF LDP, IF ONLY BY VIRTUE OF ITS SUCCESS. IT IS -- AND WAS MEANT TO BE -- A CONSERVATIVE ALTERNATIVE OFFERING FRESH LEADERSHIP, MODERN STYLE AND RESPONSIVENESS TO POPULAR WILL. IT WAS SUCCESS OF THIS APPROACH WHICH UNDERSCORED LDP IMAGE PROBLEMS. IT ALSO INDICATED EASIEST PATH OF LDP RECOVERY -- RECAPTURE OF NLC VOTES. QUESTION IS WHETHER LDP CAN PROJECT SUFFICIENTLY IMPROVED IMAGE, THROUGH LEADERSHIP CHANGE AND CONCRETE ACCOMPLISHMENTS, TO PERSUADE VOTERS, PARTICULARLY YOUNGER VOTERS, TO RETURN.

5. ON ASSUMPTION THAT LDP WILL MANAGE SOME IMAGE IMPROVEMENT, BUT PROBABLY NOT MAJOR ONE, QUESTION REMAINS WHAT PROTESTING PORTION OF ELECTORATE REALLY INTENDED FOR PARTY IN PAST ELECTION. WE HAVE HEARD MANY COMMENTS OF SURPRISE, AND IMPLIED REGRET, THAT LDP DID SO POORLY, INDICATING BODY OF VOTERS MIGHT RETURN TO LDP FOLD EVEN WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE OF PARTY REFORM. ON OTHER HAND, MANY OTHERS DESPITE

INITIAL SURPRISE BELIEVE LDP SETBACK WAS BASICALLY  
HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT, PUTTING PARTY ON NOTICE THAT UNLESS  
IT SEEKS OUT NEW PATHS IT IS DOOMED TO ADDITIONAL  
SETBACKS. THUS AT PRESENT, OPINION IS SHARPLY DIVIDED  
AMONG OBSERVERS ABOUT WHETHER LDP WILL STAGE COMEBACK.  
AS ONE DIET MEMBER POINTED OUT TO US, THERE WILL BE AT  
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LEAST FOUR OPPORTUNITIES IN EXT THREE AND A HALF YEARS  
TO FIND OUT: JULY 1977 UPPER HOUSE ELECTION, 1978  
REGIONAL ELECTIONS, ADDITIONAL LOWER HOUSE ELECTION, AND  
1980 UPPER HOUSE ELECTION.

6. IN SUM, RECENT ELECTION RESULTS, IN OUR VIEW, DO NOT  
PORTEND MARKED CHANGE IN US-JAPAN RELATIONS OR A TURNING  
INWARD OF NATION. THERE SEEMS TO BE FIRM POPULAR  
SUPPORT FOR CONTINUANCE OF SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH US  
AND JAPAN'S INTERNATIONALIST ORIENTATION GENERALLY. NOR  
SHOULD DIFFICULTIES INCREASE FOR AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN  
DOING BUSINESS HERE, EVEN THOUGH THEY WILL HAVE TO  
ACCUSTOM THEMSELVES, AS ELSEWHERE IN WORLD THESE DAYS,  
TO POST-LOCKHEED RULES. ELECTION RESULTS COULD, HOWEVER, MEAN  
THAT JAPANESE POLITICS, AFTER YEARS OF EXTRAORDINARY  
STABILITY, ARE ABOUT TO ENTER NEW ERA IN WHICH LDP  
NO LONGER BE ABLE TO RULE WITHOUT OTHER PARTY SUPPORT.  
TRANSITION IS LIKELY TO BE GRADUAL AND COULD TURN OUT  
TO BE MORE MATTER OF FORM (I.E., RELATIONSHIP OF  
POLITICAL PARTIES TO ONE ANOTHER) THAN SUBSTANCE  
(I.E., BASIC PHILOSOPHY AND POLICY), WITH "MODERNIZA-  
TION" AND "REJUVENATION" OF LDP AS KEY  
CATCHWORDS.  
HODGSON

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ELECTION RESULTS, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 17 DEC 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** coburnhl  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976TOKYO18549  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760464-0573  
**From:** TOKYO  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19761231/aaaabawr.tel  
**Line Count:** 205  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 76 TOKYO 17935, 76 TOKYO 18007, 76 TOKYO 18060  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** coburnhl  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 26 MAY 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <26 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <16 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** IMPLICATIONS OF JAPANESE ELECTION  
**TAGS:** PINT, PFOR, JA, US  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006